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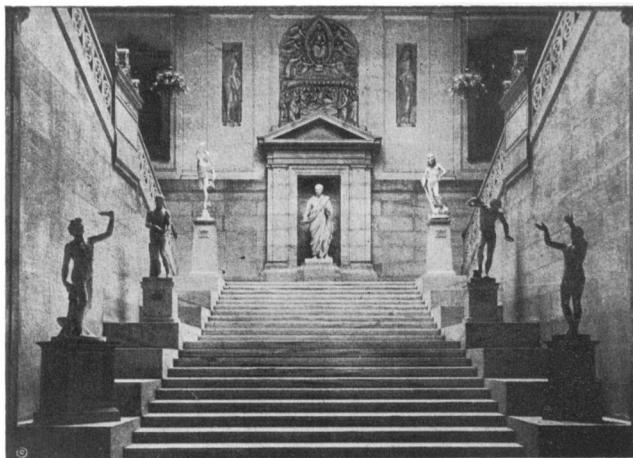
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THE STAIRCASE, CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, D. C.

THE SMALL MUSEUM*

BY HENRY W. KENT

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APRIL 15, 1485, was the most memorable day in the history of museums, even though, as some say, it was but a legendary one. On that day the "Corpse of a young Roman lady of the Classical period—wonderfully beautiful and in perfect preservation—was discovered in a marble sarcophagus by masons digging out an ancient tomb on the Appian Way." So great was the excitement of the people over the wonderful phenomenon that the Pope was obliged to spirit the body away, but the transfer to the Conservatori of the Capitol of the stone coffin inscribed "Julia, daughter of Clau-

dius," marks the beginning of museum collections as we think of them to-day. The enthusiasm, patriotism, and archeological zeal which were awakened in Rome by this discovery, and by the finding of the so-called "Grotesques," and the Apollo called "Belvedere" under the Borgia Alexander VI, and of the Laocoön, the Venus, the torso of Herakles, and the Cleopatra, under Julius II, still move us to-day and are the same vital incentives to our study of the arts of Greece and Rome. Those storehouses of the art of the past, the museums of Italy, give to us just as much as they

*A paper read at the Fourth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Arts, held in Washington, D. C., May 15 and 16, 1913.

did to the Italians of the fifteenth century, "the chief part of the culture of our age;" or, as Raphael, in his famous letter to the Pope on the preservation of the antiquities of the Eternal City, puts it: "They testify to the power and greatness of that divine soul of antiquity whose memory was inspiration to all who were capable of higher things."

The history of nations is written large in the greatest of all museums, the Louvre of France, with its *Cabinets des Rois*, collections of M. le Cardinal Mazarin, and the later spoils of convents, churches, châteaux and nations, made by the Revolution, and by the First Consul and Emperor. Again, we have the world's history in Great Britain's Museum, which started in 1753 with the collections of Sir Hans Sloane, the Irish physician and naturalist, bought by the nation with enthusiasm for less than they were worth. This beginning was followed by the gift of the King of a collection of Egyptian antiquities, the accessions of the Townley marbles, and of the sculptures from the Parthenon at Athens, until now with the spread of the Empire, the British Museum has become a storehouse of the art of many other nations.

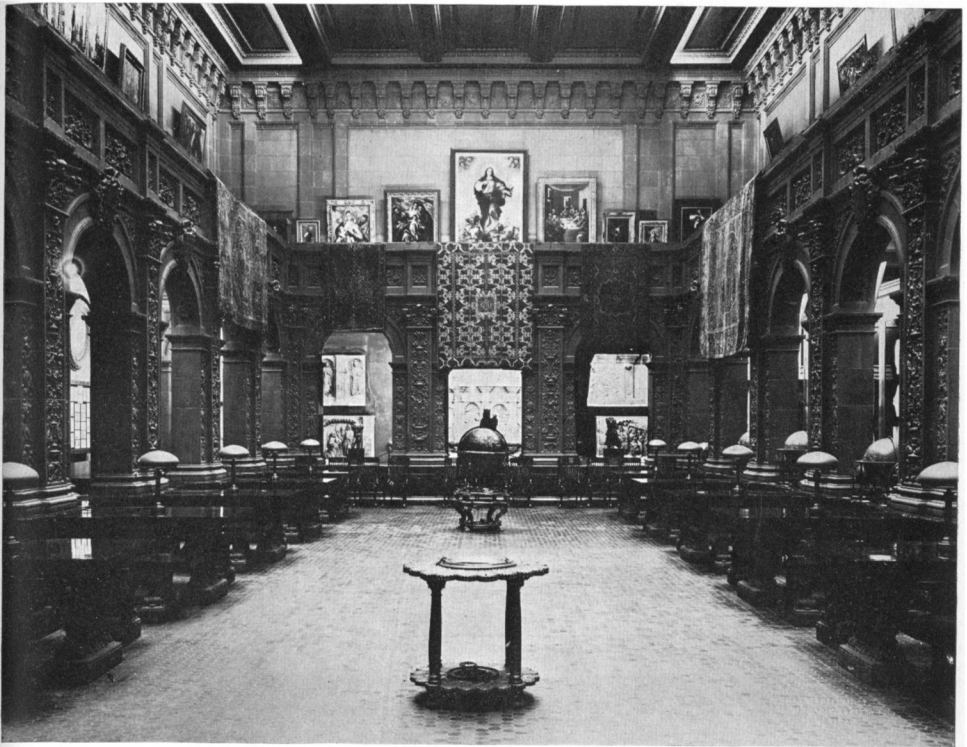
These, with the national museums of Germany, Holland, France, and Spain, are the great monumental museums of the world, serene in their traditions, unaffected by the changes, social, political, and commercial, going on about them. To those who seek them out, they are eloquent reminders of other days, nations, and cultures, but, unlike the mountain, only one of them has compromised with the prophet by condescending from its lofty estate. It is this quality of aloofness, of faith without works, which distinguishes the world museum from the museums of which we shall speak to-day.

The chief object of the small museum, as I conceive it, is to endeavor to increase its usefulness to the community. Not content with being valued rightly by the knowing, it should strive to assert itself before the ignorant; not relying upon its dignity or self-importance for

its results, it should seek to bring to the attention of the people of its community the knowledge of its virtues and values. In other words, the museums with which we are to concern ourselves are those which have come to a realizing sense of their importance as factors for happiness—"rest," as Ruskin calls it—education, and industrial excellence—new duties to perform in this twentieth century of ours. Following the disputed teaching of the Slade Professor at Oxford, that great art depicts the morals of the artist and of the community in which he lives, they lay stress upon their ethical importance as givers of healthy pleasure—pleasure in the most elevated sense. With faith in the teaching of philosophers, they believe in the educational services they have to perform; and, again, following the teaching of men like those who founded the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, they believe in the part open to them to play in the industrial betterment of the nation.

Such a creed as this, expressed or understood, has been responsible for the increase of small museums in Scandinavia, Germany, France, England, and America during the last fifty years. Under a famous decree issued by the First Consul on August 14, 1803, two classes of museums were established in France; one of them, with a view to the division among fifteen museums in the smaller towns of the national treasure in paintings. In 1908, as a result of this far-sighted policy of Napoleon, there were 264 galleries of art and museums of decorative arts, all under state supervision and with state aid, while the growth of technical schools and art schools has kept pace in numbers, testifying to the belief of the French nation in the importance of art and style in manufactures as a national asset.

Germany, the paternal, supervises and aids such institutions with a thoroughness and a beneficence unknown elsewhere, looking to the museum as a part of her educational system, and encouraging and supporting with special care the class known as industrial museums.



READING ROOM. MUSEUM OF THE HISPANIC SOCIETY OF AMERICA

Bavaria, in 1910, published the first attempt at a compilation of museum statistics, and we learn that there were in Saxony at the time 124 museums established as follows:

Unknown, 1; 1500-1750, 2; 1750-1800, 2; 1800-1810, 1; 1810-1820, 1; 1820-1830, 3; 1830-1840, 9; 1840-1850, 6; 1850-1880, 9; 1880-1890, 22; 1890-1900, 13; 1900-1910, 46.

Since then Baden has published the attendance at, and the loans made by, the museums of Karlsruhe, Mannheim, and other of its ducal cities in a statistical year book, and the municipal statistical bureaus of Prussia, especially of Berlin, Essen, and that of Dresden, report on museum attendance, while Strasburg classifies the attendance by occupations into more than sixty groups.

England early learned the lesson of the importance of the museum as an industrial factor. In 1845, an Act was passed enabling town councils of boroughs having a population exceeding

10,000 persons to levy a small rate (a penny on the pound) for the establishment of museums of Art and Science, "for the industrial advancement of the community." In 1857, through the exertions of Sir Henry Cole, was opened the Victoria and Albert Museum in South Kensington containing paintings as well as specimens of sculpture and art, educational collections, products of the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms, which are generously lent to smaller museums throughout the length and breadth of the Kingdom. But it is not derogatory to England to say, that while setting an example in this matter to other nations, her small towns have not availed themselves to the extent that might have been expected to establish museums of their own under this enlightened policy. Of 211 museums of all sorts, only 24 include objects of the fine and industrial arts, and, with a few exceptions, the influence of these collections on the community seems to be small.

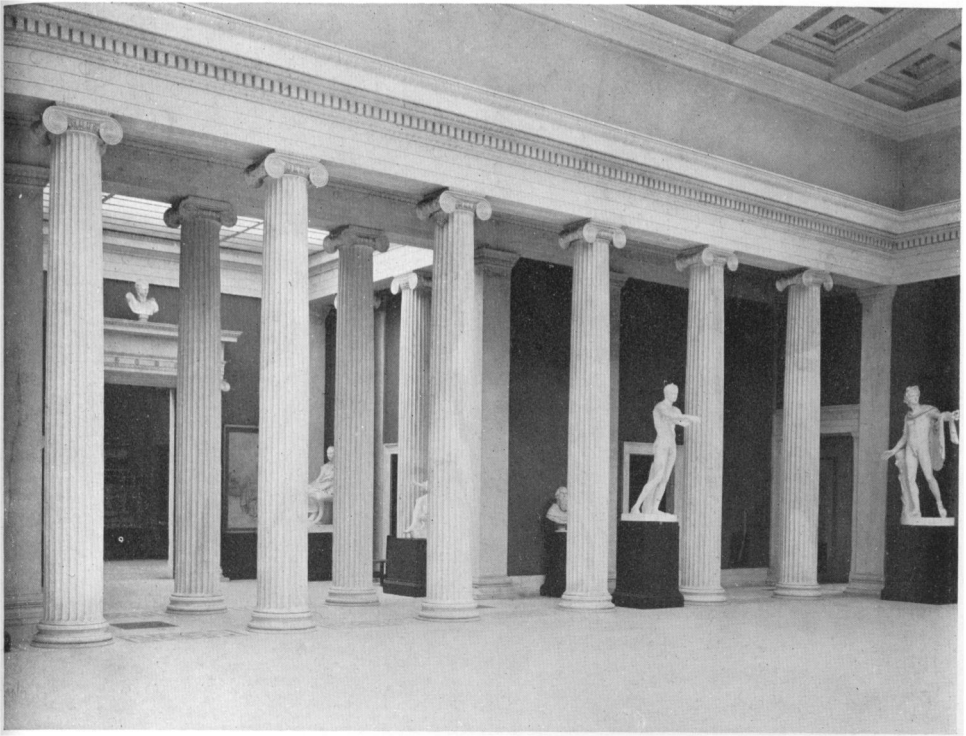


THE ALBRIGHT GALLERY. BUFFALO. N. Y.

The report of the United States Commissioner of Education for 1873, in a tabulated list of a meager thirteen museums of art and archeology, shows organizations stretching from 1824 (that of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania) to 1873 (the Park Gallery of Burlington, Vermont). Only seven of these had endowments, ranging from \$10,000 to \$1,000,000. All were privately owned, and only two received State or city aid. In 1874, the Commissioner of Education gives twenty-seven museums in his list, and in 1876, thirty-one, six having been formed since 1874. In 1881-82, there were thirty galleries and museums listed, still with but seven possessing endowments. The analysis of their collections is instructive. Five had examples of ancient sculpture, twelve of modern sculpture, and all had plaster casts of sculpture in European museums. Eight had paintings by "old masters" and twenty-six pictures by modern painters. Twenty-five had collections of photo-

graphs, twenty-four engravings, eighteen gold and silver "ware," twelve specimens of armor, seven costumes, seven Egyptian antiquities, eleven ceramics, and thirteen Indian relics. It does not require great sagacity to see that all of these museums, besides being poor, were inspired chiefly by a somewhat vague impression of the functions of a museum gained by their presidents and patrons on their "grand tours"; they were really galleries and not museums.

Three years ago there were 119 galleries of fine arts and museums of art in this country. Of these twenty-five had city or State aid, and thirty had incomes from invested funds of their own. Only five of them had more than \$50,000 endowment; three had between \$20,000 and \$50,000, and four between \$10,000 and \$20,000. One hundred and six had less than \$10,000. Of the one hundred and nineteen museums only two or three counted among their collections objects other than painting, sculpture



INTERIOR. THE ALBRIGHT GALLERY, BUFFALO, N. Y.

and prints, and not a few still suggest the traditional what-not of our grandmothers.

The schools of the century have become such an accepted fact in our educational system that we no longer remember that they also had a perilous beginning. The libraries have spread so quickly that we have forgotten the discussions that attended their early history, but it may not be amiss, in order that we may arrive at some idea of their liveliness, to contrast their development with that of museums. In 1870 the annual report of the wide-awake Commissioner of the United States Bureau of Education contained a list of 161 large libraries, not including college and school libraries. In 1872 the annual report shows 1,080 libraries of more than 1,000 volumes each. In 1903 there were reported 2,028 libraries of more than 43,000 volumes and in 1908 there were 2,298 libraries having more than 50,000 volumes.

These figures go to show that while we have been thinking about museums of art, and even founding them in some cases, our activity in this direction has by no means been keeping pace with the development of schools and libraries. Neither have we kept pace with the spread of museums of natural history. No one, to-day, doubts the value of good art in a community, and it is needless for us to dwell upon this phase of the museum's work. No one doubts that galleries of fine arts and museums of decorative and industrial art should be of use to the schools, and all educated people agree that the museums should be useful industrially. Indeed, in 1897 there was published by the Commissioner of Education an incentive and a prophecy in four large volumes entitled "Art and Industry," which urged the practicability and advisability of introducing industrial art education throughout the United States, establishing the intimate relation of this move-



THE JOHN HERRON ART INSTITUTE. INDIANAPOLIS, IND.

ment to the prosperity of a manufacturing people, enumerating the resources and instrumentalities of high art, showing the relations of education to the arts and industry of a nation, the pressing need of all the people for artistic training—prophesying the approach of a sudden development of the fine and decorative arts; and, again, under the head of the "Democracy of Art," suggesting the direct and indirect relations of art to education, to industry, and to national prosperity.

If we are honest with ourselves, the vital question to-day is with regard to the efficiency of the museums already in operation in this country. There is no way to gauge their effectiveness in elevating the public taste and ministering to its enjoyment except with time and the evidence of that general cultivation which comes with the assimilation of art. This function must be performed

in faith. As to the question of the more direct value of the museum to the schools of art and decoration and to the teaching of art in the public schools and, through them, to the manufactures, which is the most important and the most needed service the museum owes our democracy, I must leave that to be presented by those who are to come after me. I sincerely hope that some one will touch upon the reason why industrial education in art schools to-day in this country in most cases does not need the museum, and if we may not expect in the future high schools or colleges of the decorative arts where the higher knowledge of these arts shall be taught to students of the advanced type.

If failure there be to accomplish results in the directions just mentioned, it is due to one of two causes, or perhaps both: insufficient equipment in museums, or ineffective use of the museums by the

schools. We cannot read the statistics just given without gaining the impression that our museums are few in number, and that some of them have been developed without a clear, devoted, and steadfast faith in their usefulness along all of the lines here described. We find a preponderance of "galleries of art," and only a few collections of the decorative arts, which shows either that our collections have been given to us by the wills of private collectors, or made according to tradition. All of them are private institutions. There are reasons, no doubt, why they should be private foundations, administered by boards of gentlemen chosen because of their wealth and position in the community. We are apt to distrust our aldermen. Money is the first essential to the acquisition of objects of art to-day, and in many cases it has been nobly spent by patrons of the

arts on behalf of the communities where they live, but is it not a fair question to ask whether we should wait for such beneficence, whether the Government or the towns themselves should not expect to be responsible for the formation of small public museums—public in the real sense of the word? We leave our schools and our libraries to our Government; why should we not expect something from it for our museums? It is quite certain that the interrelations of schools and museums can only be regulated and made to accomplish their best results by some power controlling both of them.

One of the great needs to-day, if museums are to multiply and become great in the land, is help from some authoritative commission, which is equipped to give advice on such important questions as organization, location, building, markets, prices, loans. We have reached



ISAAC DELGADO MUSEUM OF ART. NEW ORLEANS. LA.

the point of knowing that all of these things are of basic importance, that the right kind of organization is necessary; that there may be two sides to the question of park occupation on the outskirts as against the site in the heart of the town; that the planning of museum buildings is a specialty; that markets and prices may be as engrossing and as complicated as any other questions in finance, and that loan exhibitions are like the circulation of the blood which vitalizes the body. Statistics are needed; in Germany, as we have seen, the Government makes them, believing, we cannot doubt, that there is no saner method in history, no surer check on false moves, useless expenditures, and worthless traditions than tables of figures. The problems of the small museums are many, indeed, and not alone these just mentioned, but even more important ones, like the questions of borrowing and lending, and the questions of purchases in markets dominated by rich collectors, who prevent the accessions of objects of art by public institutions while they live and present the same things to them when they die.

Many of our museums have justified

themselves: Boston, Worcester, Providence, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, St. Louis, Cincinnati among the older foundations, and others of more recent date. We shall hear to-day of the rise and progress of one of the most recent and one of the most useful recruits among museums of fine arts. Salem with its Essex Institute will be an inspiration to those towns desiring to lay stress upon the historical side of their collections; Providence, Philadelphia, and Springfield, to those whose aim is to aid and abet the industries of their communities. I shall not speak of the museum as an adjunct to other institutions like schools and colleges, because that is a field in itself and we are fortunate in having so able a representative as Mr. Mather to tell us about such a museum.

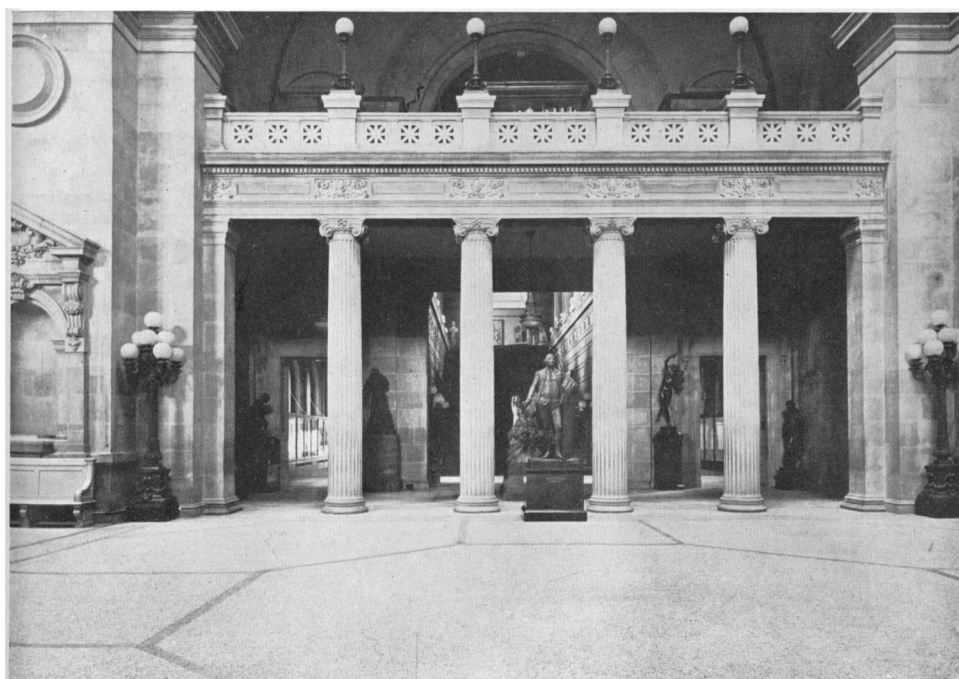
My subject is too large to talk about in the time allotted to me, and I can only hope to have called to your attention, even in so rambling a way, some of the problems attending the existence of museums to-day. Some of us still look to the report of the Honorable Commissioner of Education as a prophecy that must be fulfilled.



PUBLIC ART GALLERY, DALLAS, TEXAS

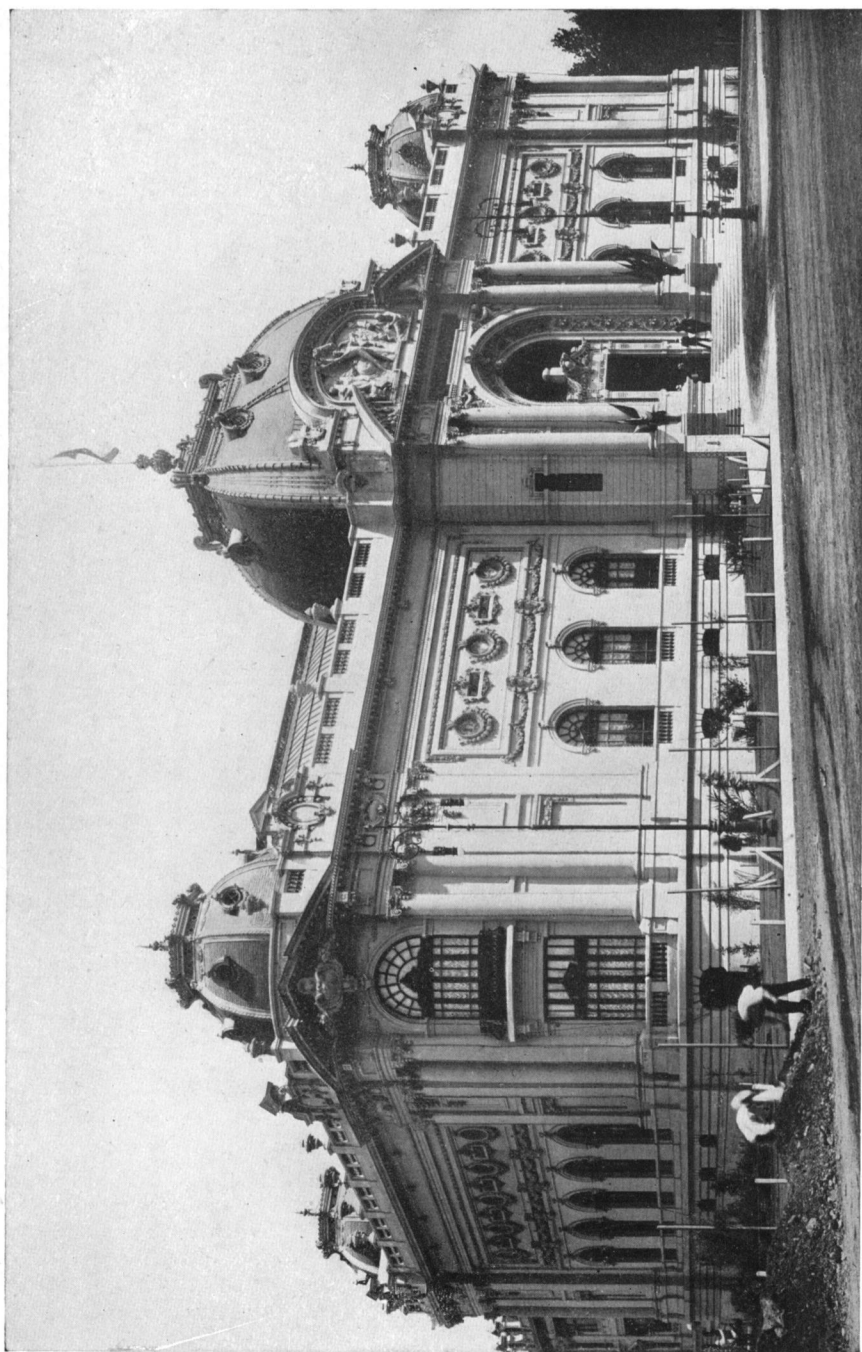


PICTURE GALLERY, SHOWING ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES, WALL COVERING AND ARRANGEMENT OF EXHIBITS



HALL, STAIRCASE AND FOYER, FIFTH AVENUE ENTRANCE

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK



MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, SANTIAGO, CHILE
COURTESY OF THE PAN AMERICAN UNION